

APPENDIX K

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACECS)

ACEC EVALUATION PROCESS BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designation is an administrative designation used by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that is accomplished through the land use planning process. It is unique to the BLM in that no other agency uses this form of designation. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) states that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will give priority to the designation and protection of ACECs in the development and revision of land use plans.

BLM regulations (43 CFR part 1610) define an ACEC as an area “within the public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards.” Private lands and lands administered by other agencies are not included in the boundaries of ACECs. ACECs differ from other special management designations such as Wilderness Study Areas in that designation by itself does not automatically prohibit or restrict other uses in the area (with the exception that a mining plan of operation is required for any proposed mining activity within a designated ACEC). In order to be designated, special management beyond standard provisions established by the plan must be required to protect the relevant and important values.

Sixty-three nominations were evaluated in the Dillon RMP planning process using the Relevance and Importance Criteria described in this appendix. Additional information describing the nomination and evaluation process and the results of the assessment are contained in a report prepared by the BLM Dillon Field Office in November 2002 (USDI-BLM 2002c). This report is incorporated by reference into this document as background material for the Draft Dillon RMP/EIS.

RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE CRITERIA

Relevance

An area meets the relevance criteria if it contains one or more of the following:

- A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to native Americans).
- A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species, or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).
- A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).
- Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the RMP process that it has become part of a natural process.

Importance

The value, resource, system, process, or hazard described in the relevance section must have substantial significance and values to meet the importance criteria. This generally means that the value, resource, system, process, or hazard is characterized by one or more of the following:

- Has more than locally significant qualities which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.
- Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.

- Has been recognized as warranting protection in order to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.
- Has qualities that warrant highlighting in order to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.
- Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.

SUMMARY

A total of 63 nominated areas were evaluated as part of the Dillon land use planning process. These included areas previously nominated in 1979 in the Dillon MFP, nominations received from the public as part of scoping, and areas nominated or expanded by BLM staff specialists. As a result of work completed by a subgroup convened by the Western Montana Resource Advisory Council and a BLM review team, 14 of the 63 nominations met both the relevance and importance criteria and are analyzed within the ACEC sections of this Draft RMP/EIS. These 14 Potential ACECs are listed in Table 1 below. However, the Thorium City Site has been dropped as a Potential ACEC as a result of remediation of any health and safety threats. The 49 nominations which were considered and evaluated but rejected as Potential ACECs are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 1
Potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

<i>Area Name</i>	<i>Values of Concern</i>	<i>Acres/Miles</i>
Beaverhead Rock	Historic resources	120 acres
Big Sheep Creek Basin	Wetland habitats and associated sensitive plant species	2,393 acres within 25,990 acres
Block Mountain	Geologic features	8,661 acres
Blue Lake	Axolotl habitat	430 acres
Centennial Mountains	Scenic values, grizzly bear, lynx, wolf habitats, wildlife migration, Whipple's beardtongue, avalanche ecology	40,715 acres
Centennial Sandhills	Sand dune complex and associated plant species of special concern	1,040 acres
Centennial Valley Wetlands	Wetland habitats, peregrine falcon, trumpeter swan, and other migratory bird habitat, paleontological resources	17,335 acres
Everson Creek	Cultural resources	8,608 acres
Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area	Ferruginous hawk nests/habitat	114,300 acres
Lewis & Clark Trail	Historic resource	8,136 acres; 16 miles
Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek	Scenic values, cultural resources	22,829 acres
Thorium City Site	Radioactivity as a natural hazard	82 acres
Virginia City Historic District	Historic resources	340 acres
Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats	Westslope cutthroat trout populations with greater than 99% purity	2,157 acres; 84 miles

Table 2
ACEC Nominations Considered But Rejected

<i>Nomination</i>	<i>Acres/Miles of Public Land</i>	<i>Reason Nomination Did Not Move Forward as Potential ACEC</i>
Alaska Basin Wildlife Linkage	3,200 acres	Did not meet relevance criteria for natural system or process within public lands given scattered public land ownership.
Axolotl Lakes	5,440 acres	Did not meet relevance criteria for general fish and wildlife (see Blue Lake potential ACEC for axolotl habitat). Did not meet the importance criteria for scenic values.
Badger Gulch/Reservoir Creek	25,000 acres	Met the relevance criteria but did not meet the importance criteria for fish and wildlife resource or as a natural process or system.
Bannack Historic District	950 acres	There are no public lands administered by BLM remaining in this area.
Blacktail Wildlife Linkage	56,000 acres	Did not meet relevance criteria for natural system or process within public lands given scattered public land ownership or for fish and wildlife resources given similar habitats in the area and region.
Bull Trout Habitats	0	There are no known bull trout habitats in the DFO planning area.
Centennial Valley and Mountains	Not calculated	Did not meet the relevance criteria given the broad nature of the nomination. More specific information is addressed in the Centennial Mountains, Centennial Sandhills, and Centennial Valley Wetlands nominations which are all potential ACECs.
City of Butte Big Hole River Diversion	0	Nomination is located outside of the DFO planning area.
City of Dillon Grasshopper Creek Diversion	Not calculated	This nomination is included in the Dillon Field Office Municipal Water Supplies nomination, but did not meet the relevance criteria.
City of Lima Municipal Watershed	Not calculated	This nomination is included in the Dillon Field Office Municipal Water Supplies nomination, but did not meet the relevance criteria.
Clark Canyon	6,844 acres	Did not meet the criteria for relevance as a natural hazard.
Dillon Field Office	900,000 acres	Did not meet the relevance criteria given the broad and general nature of the nomination to cover all public lands in the planning area.
Dillon Field Office Municipal Water Supplies (includes City of Dillon Grasshopper Creek Diversion and City of Lima Municipal Watershed nominations)	Not calculated	Inadequate nomination materials. Did not meet the relevance criteria based on best available information.

East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek	6,231 acres	Met the relevance criteria for scenic and fish and wildlife resources, but not for natural hazards. Did not meet the importance criteria for scenic or fish and wildlife resources when compared to other areas in the region and state.
Ermont Mill Site	Not calculated	Did not meet the relevance criteria; not a natural hazard or process.
Glen Tungsten Mill Site	20 acres	Did not meet the relevance criteria; not a natural hazard or process.
Grizzly Bear Use Areas	Not calculated	Inadequate nomination materials. No specific habitats identified. No location was provided for this nomination.
Horse Prairie Watershed	53,800 acres	Did not meet the relevance criteria as no specific values were identified.
Jerry Johnson Creek	Not calculated	Nomination is located outside of the DFO planning area.
Johnson Gulch	7,400 acres	Did not meet the relevance criteria for fish and wildlife resources, but did meet relevance for natural process or system containing sensitive plants and good examples of endemic plant communities. However, did not meet the importance criteria.
Lemhi Pass	0	No public lands administered by the BLM in this area.
Lemhi Pass Wildlife Linkage	2,400 acres	Did not meet relevance criteria for natural system or process within public lands given scattered public land ownership or for fish and wildlife resources.
Lima/Sweetwater Breaks Raptor Area	Not calculated	Met the relevance criteria for fish and wildlife resource (raptors) but did not meet the importance criteria for all raptors, but only for ferruginous hawks given nest densities (see Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area potential ACEC).
Lima Reservoir	Not calculated	This nomination was within the boundaries of the Centennial Valley Wetlands nomination and was evaluated with that nomination and did not move forward on its own.
Lynx Areas	Not calculated	Inadequate nomination materials. No specific habitats identified.
Madison River Corridor	Not calculated	Did not meet the relevance criteria given that it was nominated for recreation values.
Maiden Rock/Camp Creek/ Soap Gulch	Not calculated	Portions of this nomination are located outside the DFO planning area. The portions of this nomination within the boundaries of the Melrose-Maiden Rock Bighorn nomination were evaluated with that nomination.
Medicine Lodge Divide Meteorite Impact Site	Not calculated	Did not meet the relevance criteria.

Melrose-Maiden Rock Bighorn (includes Maiden Rock/Camp Creek/Soap Gulch and Tendoy Bighorn nominations)	Not calculated	Met the relevance criteria but did not meet the importance criteria.
Norris Hill Cyanide Leach Site	0	Did not meet the relevance criteria; not a natural hazard or process. No location was provided for this nomination.
Pipe Organ	900 acres	Met the relevance criteria for historic values but not for fish and wildlife values. Did not meet the importance criteria for historic values (see Lewis and Clark Trail potential ACEC for that value).
Pony Town Dump	5 acres	Did not meet the relevance criteria; not a natural hazard or process.
Recreational Zones (heavily used)	Not calculated	Inadequate nomination materials. No specific areas identified.
Red Buttes Experiment Station Cyanide Leach Site	Not calculated	Did not meet the relevance criteria; not a natural hazard or process. No location was provided for this nomination
Red Rock	Not calculated	This nomination was within the boundaries of the Centennial Valley Wetlands nomination and was evaluated with that nomination and did not move forward on its own.
Rochester Mining District	23,000 acres	Met the relevance criteria for historic values but not as a natural process or hazard. Did not meet the importance criteria for historic values.
Sage Creek	35,000 acres	Met the relevance criteria for fish and wildlife resource but did not meet the importance criteria.
Sage Creek Rest-Rotation Research/Demonstration Area	Not calculated	This nomination was withdrawn from review by the nominator.
Sage Grouse Areas	887,000 acres	Met the relevance criteria for fish and wildlife resource but did not meet the importance criteria.
Sagebrush Creek	128,524 acres	Met the relevance criteria for fish and wildlife resource and as a natural process or system, but did not meet the importance criteria.
Standard Creek	80 acres	Inadequate nomination materials. No specific values identified.
Stone Creek Talc Mine	Not calculated	Did not meet the relevance criteria.
Taylor Mountain	3,800 acres	This nomination was within the boundaries of the Centennial Mountains nomination and was evaluated with that nomination and did not move forward on its own.
Tendoy Bighorn Sheep Habitat	Not calculated	This nomination was evaluated with the Melrose-Maiden Rock Bighorn nomination and met the relevance criteria but not the importance criteria.

Upper Centennial Basin Bald Eagle Nesting Area	40 acres	Met the relevance criteria but not the importance criteria.
Waters on 303(d) List	Not calculated	Did not meet the relevance criteria.
Wildlife/Biological Corridors	Not calculated	This nomination was withdrawn from review by the nominator and replaced with other specific nominations (see Alaska Basin, Blacktail, and Lemhi Pass Wildlife Linkage nominations).
Wolf Areas	Not calculated	Inadequate nomination materials. No specific habitats identified. No location was provided for this nomination.
Wolverine Areas	Not calculated	Inadequate nomination materials. No specific habitats identified. No location was provided for this nomination.